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Estimates on the total number[11] of clergy vary, but in 1931 they appear to have numbered 500,000 - 600,000. Refugees reported that four out of every seven clerics had been forced to return to lay life.[12] By 1954 it was estimated that there were only 2,500 clergy remaining in the whole of China, "of which half are Chinese Communist Party agents."[13] Even allowing for exaggeration, it would appear that the Buddhist clergy as a group has been nearly eliminated and that its dwindling influence in society has reached the vanishing point.

While the traditional clergy was in decline, Buddhist laymen assisted by a few monks attempted the reinvigoration of the Chinese Buddhist community. Modern-minded Buddhists felt that a lesson could be learned from Protestantism in the West: than an entrenched clergy could not be the instrument of sweeping reform. Hence their efforts were concentrated on building lay organizations of various kinds: social welfare organizations such as the Red Swastika Society (modeled on the Red Cross), YMBA and YWBA patterned on the YMCA and YWCA, Buddhist schools and seminaries to train a modern clergy, and research centers for the re-evaluation of the Buddhist heritage. They attempted to reach out and join hands with Buddhists in other Asiatic countries, and good-will tours and conferences were

11. Chan, op. cit., pp. 80-81.
12. Chan, op. cit., pp. 90-91.
13. Atrocities.

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for the believer a different way of life from that of the Chinese, it also had international connections and a tradition of militancy. These aspects of Mohammedanism made their communities in China the object of government distrust, and governments in modern times have alternated between policies of suppression and of appeasement.

The Chinese Mohammedan is set apart from other Chinese by such special customs and observances as these: many greetings are exchanged in Arabic or Persian; believers wear white headdresses resembling turbans; they abstain from alcohol and pork; marriage and funeral rites are unlike those of the Chinese, e.g. they do not use coffins in burial. Traditionally, they seldom engage in farming but rather in certain occupations which in some areas they virtually monopolize: keeping inns and organizing caravans, butchering, leather working, metal work, or managing shops which deal in curios and jewelry. Because of oppression and a strong sense of religious community, they tend to live in special districts or streets. They have been more inclined towards athletics and military careers than the Chinese.[35]

The Moslem sector of a city or the Moslem village community centers on its mosque presided over by its Imam, usually elected from among

35. Chan, op. cit., p. 6; Encyclopedia of China Problems, pp. 421-22.

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senior leaders; the Imam and the elders invite an Ahung who preaches, settles disputes, interprets Islamic law, and presides at ceremonies.[36] The Ahung was usually versed in Arabic, although until very recently few had any direct contact with major centers of Islam in the Near East.

In the Central-South Region, Mohammedan communities are found in all provinces. But the major centers, now recognized by the Communists as "Autonomous Areas," lie in the northwest and in Central Asia. The following table[37] of believers and religious establishments (probably mosques) give some indication of their distribution throughout the region, as of 1938. However the source of these figures gives the total number of Moslems in China as more than 48,000,000, a figure that some scholars think is far too high.[38]

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36. Chan, op. cit., p. 189; Encyclopedia of China Problems, pp. 421-22.

37. Chung-kuo Nien Chien [Chinese Yearbook], 1948, pp. 126-27.

38. Cf. the admirable summary of the statistical argument in Chan, op. cit., pp. 187-88. Chan, p. 188, note 12, cites the leading Chinese Mohammadan scholar Pai Shou-i's estimate of between 30 and 40 million Moslems in China. The picture publication Chinese Moslems, Peking, the Foreign Languages Press, 1955, gives the figure 10 million.